



Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology

Research and Publication Office (RPO)

AUST Student Research Grant (ASRG)

(Terms and Conditions, and Application Procedures)

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1.0 Preamble

Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST) shall regularly allocate a portion of its annual budget to fund internal research by undergraduate students. This grant will exclusively support undergraduate students at AUST, aiming to foster innovation, encourage high-quality research, product design and development, and enhance students' capabilities in conducting impactful studies.

The Research and Publication Office (RPO) will foster the research activities at AUST to generate knowledge contributing to the development of the country's intellectual assets. The award of the grant shall be made following the terms, conditions, and procedures outlined in this document. The grants will be managed by the RPO with the help of the Research Project Committee (RPC). The RPO and the RPC will notify all the relevant issues of ASRG to the Committee for Advanced Studies and Research (CASR).

2.0 Objectives

- ✓ To promote a research culture among undergraduate students.
- ✓ To foster an ecosystem of curiosity and continuous knowledge expansion within the university.
- ✓ To contribute to the societal and national development through research, innovation, and viable products.
- ✓ To encourage and support scholarly and enterprising pursuits by the students.

3.0 Call for Proposal

- AUST Student Research Grant (ASRG) applications will be solicited through *Call for Proposals* twice in a financial year.
- A *Call for Proposals* for ASRG shall be published on the AUST website, and circulated among the students of AUST through the notice boards.
- Applicants shall submit research proposals in prescribed forms (Appendix A) for a particular *Call* within the deadline set by the RPO.
- Proposals shall be evaluated through a judicious method, and the grant will be available to successful applicants twice in a year.

4.0 Application Criteria

- Applicants must be regular undergraduate students of AUST to apply for the ASRG.
- Each research team must designate one student as the Principal Investigator (PI), who will assume the primary responsibilities for leading and managing the project. The PI should be the student of the 3rd year 1st semester or above.
- The team will operate under the guidance of a Project Mentor (PM), who must be a regular faculty member. The PM will provide supervision and mentorship, and ensure that the research adheres to academic and ethical standards.
- Maximum duration of a project shall be 1 year.
- A maximum of BDT 2.5 (two and a half) lakh can be requested as the research grant for each project.
- The proposal must be submitted in Form A provided by the RPO (Appendix A).
- The proposal cannot be used for thesis, or for the fulfillment of the requirements of any degree.
- The submitted proposals for ASRG will be scrutinized. The RPO will make a cluster of the departments based on the number of applications for a particular call and ask the Head of the Departments (HoDs) to nominate one or two faculty members (in the rank of Assistant Professor or above) as scrutinizers. RPO will invite the nominated scrutinizers to a session for proposal scrutiny. At least two scrutinizers will scrutinize each project proposal.
- The comments of the scrutinizers will be sent to the Principal Investigator (PI) to revise the proposal and resubmit, if necessary. Based on the comments/recommendations from the scrutinizers, the project may be considered to process for evaluation.
- RPO will maintain an online portal to facilitate submission, review, notification, and management of submitted proposals, funding information, etc.

◆ Research Team

- A research team shall consist of 2 to 4 student members.
- Each project shall have one student of 3rd year 1st semester or above as Principal Investigator (PI) and one to three (1-3) students from any semester as Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs). This composition must be maintained throughout the project time.
- A full-time regular faculty member must be the Project Mentor (PM).
- The regular students from any department or school are eligible to form the research team. To be eligible, students must have at least one year of studentship remaining from the anticipated project start date. While not required, formation of a multi-disciplinary team is encouraged.
- No student is eligible to engage in more than one ASRG project simultaneously. Upon the successful completion of the one ongoing ASRG project, students can apply for another ASRG project provided other conditions are met.
- If a PM is unable to continue with a research project, he/she should nominate a suitable regular faculty member to continue the role in the project.

- If the Principal Investigator (PI) is unable to continue with the project, he/she must consult the Project Mentor (PM) to nominate a replacement PI from the existing team of Co-PIs. Before stepping down, the outgoing PI must transfer all responsibilities, hand over relevant documents, and settle any outstanding budget matters with the new PI, and this transfer must be approved by the PM in writing and then by the RPC. In such context, the team can co-opt a new student as Co-PI.
- If a Co-PI is unable to continue the project, the PI, in consultation with the PM, may include another student. However, the number of Co-PIs should be between 1 and 3.
- If the PI and Co-PIs (i.e., student) of a project are unable to continue the project, and no other Co-PI is available to take up the project responsibilities, the Research and Publication Committee (RPC) will consult with the PM and decide about the project's continuation and completion.
- If project progress is affected by any other unforeseen reason or changed circumstances, it should be referred to the RPC for taking appropriate decision.
- ◆ **Project Mentor (PM)**
 - Only a regular faculty member can be the Project Mentor (PM).
 - Project proposal must be submitted with the consent of the PM.
 - Any official document, like progress report, budgetary application, project completion report (PCR), and anything related to the project, must have the sign (approval) of the PM.
 - If any issue or conflict arises among the student research team, the PM will resolve the issue.
 - A Project Mentor (PM) can be involved in 2 (two) ASRG research projects simultaneously.
 - The PM is primarily responsible for guiding the research team to obtain timely outcomes, and systematic completion of the project.

5.0 Selection of Research Grantees

- The grant applications will be initially scrutinized/screened for eligibility by RPO as mentioned in Section 4.0. The concerned scrutinizing team will verify the budget, project duration, timeline, and compliance of the project and the applicants. The scrutinizing team will also suggest three (3) potential reviewers to review the proposals.
- After the screening, the RPO will send the comments to the PIs for revising the proposals if required. After receiving the revised proposals from PIs, the RPO will send the document to the RPC for conducting the double blind review process, along with a list of at least 3 (three) prospective reviewers for each proposal who have already consented.
- The RPC will be chaired by the Pro-VC, and shall consist of the Deans of the Faculties and the Head of the Department to which the PI belongs. If the Dean or HoD is a

member of the grant application in the said project, then a senior faculty member can represent the Faculty or Department.

- The RPC will select appropriate reviewers for each eligible grant application from several suggestions sent by the screening committee and the members of the RPC. The peer review process will be double-blinded.
- The reviewers will receive an honorarium for reviewing ASRG proposals. The honorarium will be decided and managed by the RPO.
- Each project will be reviewed by 3 (three) independent reviewers as selected by the RPC. The reviewers must be selected from outside AUST.
- The RPC will set the deadline to receive the evaluation from the reviewers.
- If all three reviewers submit their evaluation reports and scores within the deadline, the highest two scores will be considered for assessing the proposal's merit.
- The RPO will use the scores from the first two submitted reviews if one report fails to arrive on time.
- The RPO shall try to receive the evaluation reports and scores from the reviewers within the deadline.
- The reviewers will give their comments and scores on the proposal by using Form B (Annexure B).
- If the average of the top two evaluation scores (out of three) is less than 60%, the project will not be granted.
- If two scores are submitted within the deadline and their average is 60% or higher, but one of the scores is 40% or lower, the proposal will undergo an accelerated review by an internal reviewer at AUST. In this case, the two closest scores will be considered for the final decision.
- One project with the highest average of the scores from the reviewers from each program will be awarded in the first instant. That means a maximum of 8 projects will be awarded (i.e., 8 UG programs) at AUST in each cycle.
- If more fund is available after awarding one project from each program, then the rest of the projects from all the programs will be awarded based on the average scores. However, the eligible average score is 60%.
- If the total awarded value of selected projects (with at least one from each department) exceeds the allocated budget, a limited number of top-scoring proposals will be awarded. In such cases, proposals receiving the highest scores among the best proposals from each department will be prioritized.

6.0 Evaluation Criteria

- **Design, Novelty and Feasibility:**
 - The proposal is written in a way that a person with no prior knowledge of the subject can make an informed judgment on the scientific or scholarly merit of the proposed project.

- The proposal clearly describes the objectives and anticipated implications of the project's findings and how the project intends to achieve them.
 - The proposed project clearly exhibits the application of a sound investigative methodology.
 - Models/procedures relevant to the statistical and survey analyses are linked to the research questions/hypotheses and observe moral and ethical values.
 - Tasks, deliverables, and milestones are properly specified, achievable within the timeline, and aligned with the project objectives.
 - All the works relevant to the project proposal, investigation, data, analysis, report, etc. maintain the required moral and ethical standards.
- **Significance of Expected Results and Outcomes:**
 - The proposal demonstrates originality by introducing new ideas and revisiting established concepts, applying them to new contexts, and suggesting meaningful improvements or developing a viable product that may bring a great benefit to society.
 - Regardless of the research area, the proposal highlights its potential value—such as contributing to scholarly publications in reputable peer-reviewed journals, leading to patentable inventions, fostering entrepreneurial initiatives, or addressing local challenges.
 - The project shows promise for attracting external funding or enhancing the institution's academic reputation.

7.0 Fiscal and Other Conditions

- The number of proposals to be funded will be contingent upon the availability of funds.
- The amount of the maximum grant per project will be reviewed every three (3) years by the RPO and subsequently by the AUST statutory bodies.
- A maximum of Tk 15,000 (fifteen thousand) of the research grant can be requested as honorariums for the PM.
- A maximum of 10% of the research grant can be requested as incentives for the PI and the Co-PIs (students) upon the successful completion of the project. This amount must be equally distributed among the student research team (PI and Co-PIs).
- The approved budget may be revised during the project by adjusting allocations under different heads; the revised budget must be approved by the PM and the Director of RPO.
- In extraordinary circumstances of cost escalation that may affect the project progress, the PI, with the approval of the PM, may apply to the RPC for consideration of a budget increase. The RPC will assess and decide accordingly.

- The maximum allowable extension of a project is six (6) months, subject to RPC approval based on the recommendation of the PM and the HoD. Extensions may only be requested for a period of three (3) months at a time. If further time is needed, a second extension request may be submitted with proper justification.
- For fund release, the PI, with the approval of the PM, should submit an application using Form D (Annexure D) to the Treasurer through the Director of RPO. The first request for the fund release should be within a month after approving the proposal.
- University rules and regulations shall be applicable for purchasing equipment.
- All sourced equipment under the grant must be initially placed in the inventory. Once in the inventory, it will be handed over to the project members. After the project's completion, the equipment/accessories can be used by the team members with prior approval from the HoD. The HoD can give permission to use the equipment/accessories by the research team for a period of three (3) months (renewable) if the project's work requires it.
- The PI should try to avail equipment through the department, institute, or by other means rather than making a budgetary request in the proposal.
- Project funding commitments from all additional sources (if applicable) should be made known and documented. Multiple grants for the same component or the whole of a project cannot be availed.
- The project budget should be inclusive of all the applicable VAT and TAX.
- **Fund Releasing Strategy:**
 - The fund of the ASRG awarded projects will be released in three (3) installments [1st installment (50%) after approval of the project, 2nd installment (40%) during the project period, and 3rd installment (10%) after the completion of the project].
 - PI should apply for releasing the 1st installment within 30 days of getting the final approval (awarded) of the project.
 - The commencement of the project will be considered from the day of the fund release of the 1st installment.
 - The second installment (40%) will be released upon submission of a progress report, which will be evaluated by the Head of the Department and a senior assigned faculty member. The progress report must demonstrate satisfactory progress and indicate that the project is on track for timely completion.
 - If the team fails to demonstrate adequate progress, or if the projected outcomes appear unachievable within the given timeline, even with extension, no further funds will be released until reasonable progress has been made.
 - The third installment (10%) will be disbursed only upon successful completion of the project.

- **Evaluation and Monitoring:**

- The PI, with the approval of the PM, must submit a progress report at the time of requesting the 2nd installment or 6 months after the project's commencement (whichever is the earliest) using Form C (Annexure C).
- The HoD of the department to which PM belongs will head the Evaluation Team that shall evaluate and monitor project progress during the project. He/she will select any faculty member in the rank of Assistant Professor and above specializing in the area of that particular research topic to help with this task.
- If this team finds it necessary, it may ask the PI to present the progress of the research project and arrange a site visit.
- The PI, with the approval of the PM, must submit a project completion report (PCR) within 1 month of project completion using Form F (Annexure F).
- The HoD will form a three-member evaluation committee and request the research team to give a presentation.
- The department will be responsible for organizing the presentation.
- The three-member evaluation committee is –
 - HoD of the respective department or his/her nominee will be the Chair of the evaluation committee.
 - Two expert faculty members from AUST (based on the research field) in the rank of Assistant Professor or above nominated by the respective department.

Based on the PCR and the presentation of the research team, each member of the evaluation committee will give scores (out of 100).

80+ Excellent

60 – 80 Good

50 – 60 Average

Score less than 50 – Resubmission

The evaluation committee will finalize the scores based on the marks of each member of the evaluation committee. If the average score is less than 50, the research team must take necessary actions to revise and resubmit the PCR based on the evaluation committee's comments within 2 months. In such a case, the evaluation committee may ask for another presentation.

The second time, if the team fails to score more than 50, the PI, and Co-PIs will not be allowed to submit a project for the next 2 (two) years for the ASRG at AUST.

- The evaluation committee shall evaluate and ascribe a letter grade (A: excellent, B: good, C: average, D: not satisfactory) to the Project Completion Report. This grade may be considered for awarding the next research grant.
- At the time of graduation, the student must have the clearance from the PM, HoD, and the RPO of his/her ASRG project.

8.0 Ethical Issues

- Grant funding will not be released until RPO receives an appropriate review on ethical aspects, use of human or animal subjects, social and behavioral concerns, or biomedical hazards.
- Students must not receive any extra academic advantage due to their involvement in the project, and project activities must not hinder academic responsibilities.
- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) shall provide the service of such review when required.
- All Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) related norms shall be observed. Related support shall be provided by the RPO, while any dispute thereof shall be dealt with by the RPC.
- Grant holders must acknowledge RPO's support (and where possible, include RPO's logo) in all research outputs, including publications, oral or written reports, posters, presentations, and information posted on websites related to the ASRG activities or results.

9.0 Award

The research project will award notable publications in high-quality journals (Scopus indexed, i.e., Q1, Q2 ranked), IEEE, ABS (Association of Business Schools), etc.

AUST reserves all the rights to revise/modify/change or make any decision regarding the ASRG as and when necessary.

10.0 Annexures

- 10.1 Annexure A: Grant Application Form
- 10.2 Annexure B: Proposal Evaluation Form
- 10.3 Annexure C: Project Progress Report
- 10.4 Annexure D: Budget Request Form
- 10.5 Annexure E: Project Completion Form